



# Department of Justice

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## **FORMER VERMILLION COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR SENTENCED**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

INDIANAPOLIS - Ramon J. Colombo, 69, Clinton, Indiana, was sentenced to 10 months in prison today by U.S. District Judge William T. Lawrence following his guilty plea to federal program theft. This case was the result of a investigation by the Department of Homeland Security, the Indiana State Police and the Indiana Office of Inspector General.

Colombo was appointed Director of the Vermillion County Emergency Management Agency (VCEMA) by the Vermillion County Commissioners in 1989, and continuously served in that capacity until his retirement on September 30, 2008. In his capacity as VCEMA Director, Colombo also directed the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP), an entity established to neutralize the VX nerve gas stored by the government in Vermillion County. The Federal Emergency Management Agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security provided funding to the CSEPP.

Sargent Electric Company of Terre Haute routinely contracted with VCEMA and CSEPP to provide services and equipment validly needed by those agencies. However, on certain occasions, Colombo approached Sargent Electric Company officials and asked them to hide certain specific purchases in otherwise legitimate contracts with the county. Colombo lead the Sargent Electric authorities to believe that these items were to be used by the county but, since they had not specifically been approved, they should not be itemized or in any way noted in the formal contract documents. Based upon these requests by Colombo, Sargent Electric inflated the contract terms and then obtained and provided the requested property. The items obtained in this manner included three LCD televisions, kitchen appliances and a Kubota tractor. Each of these items was ultimately obtained by Colombo and used exclusively for his own purposes and not that of any government agency. The aggregate value of these items is \$19,196.61. The invoices in which these purchases were hidden were paid by Vermillion County between October 2005 and June 2008. The items were received by Colombo over the same time period.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney James M. Warden, who prosecuted the case for the government, Judge Lawrence also imposed two years supervised release following Colombo's release from prison. Colombo was fined in the amount of \$3,000, and ordered to make full restitution in the amount of \$19,196.61.

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